

PAREEEKSHIT

THE GRANDSON OF ARJUNA, THE PANDAVA

AMAR
CHITRA
KATHA



APPROVED
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COMICS
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AUTHORITY

Pareekshit was the posthumous son of the valiant Abhimanyu, and the grandson of the Pandava prince, Arjuna. While yet in the womb of his mother, he was the target of the fatal Brahmastra, released by Ashwatthama, son of Drona, but Lord Krishna saved him.

It is interesting to note that according to Puranic traditions, the Kali Yuga (era) is said to have started from the year of his accession, which is also the year in which Lord Krishna left the earth, for his celestial abode, Vaikuntha.

In this book is given a mythological account of Pareekshit's death at the hands of the Naga King, Takshaka. Many scholars, including Shri R.C.Majumdar and Shri A.D. Pusalker, hold that this clash with the Nagas could be a genuine historical fact. They feel that taking advantage of the weakened condition of the successors of Dhritarashtra, after the Mahabharata War, Takshaka, the King of Gandhara, might have marched against Hastinapura and Pareekshit might have died in his attempt to check their attack. The "sarpasatra", referred to in the story might be nothing but the attempts of Janamejaya, the son of Pareekshit, to avenge his father's death.

AMAR CHITRA KATHA means good reading.
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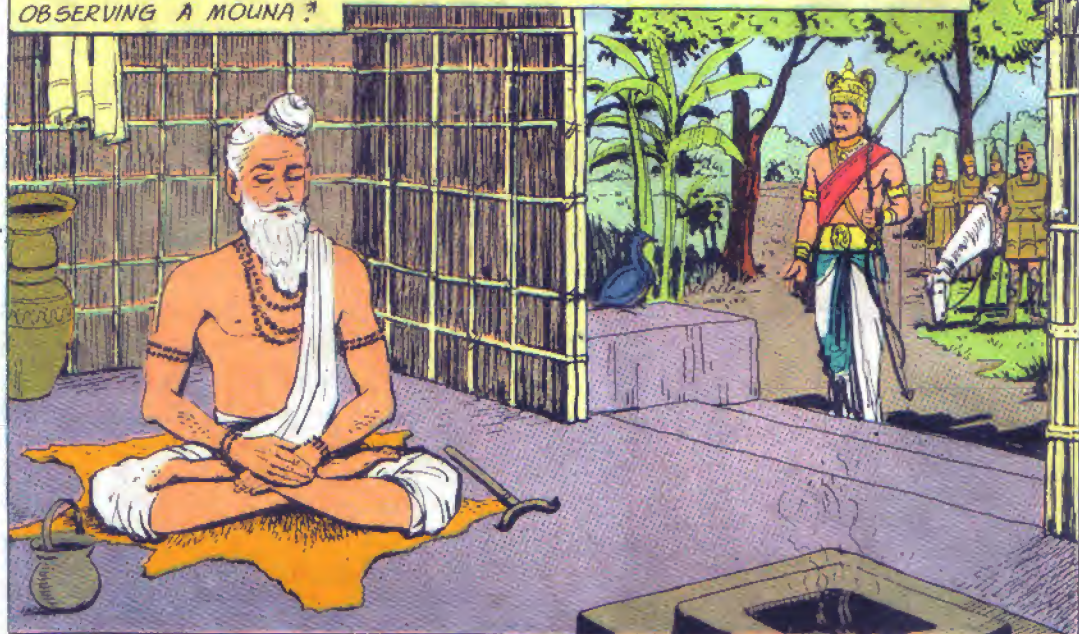
Script: B.R. Bhagwat Artwork: Prabhakar Khanolkar

PAREEKSHIT



TWO GENERATIONS AFTER THE GREAT MAHABHARATA WAR, HASTINAPURA WAS RULED BY KING PAREEKSHIT, SON OF THE VALIANT ABHIMANYU AND GRAND-SON OF THE PANDAVA PRINCE, ARJUNA. HE WAS FOND OF HUNTING.

ONCE, WHILE ON A DEER HUNT IN A FOREST, THE TIRED AND THIRSTY KING CAME TO THE HERMITAGE OF A SAGE. HE DID NOT KNOW THAT THE SAGE WAS OBSERVING A MOUNA.



REVERED SIR, I AM THIRSTY. MAY I HAVE SOME MILK ?



THE KING REPEATED HIS REQUEST BUT THE SAGE DID NOT REPLY.



THE KING FELT SLIGHTED.

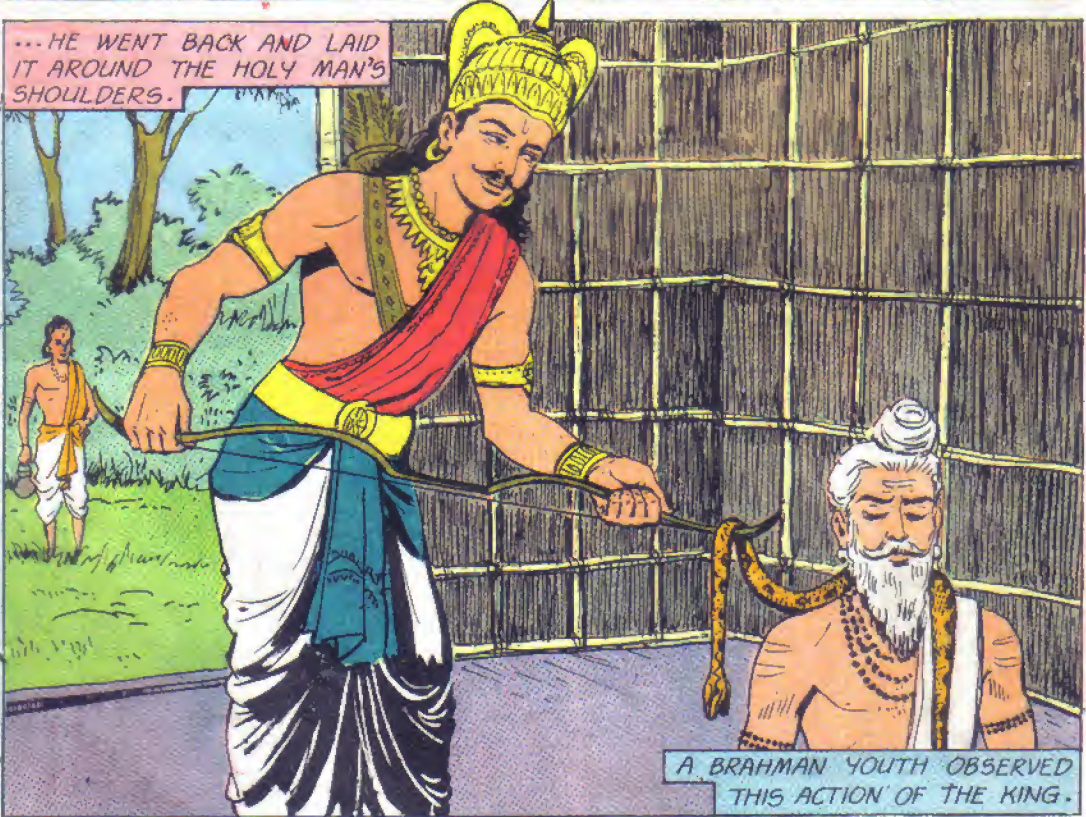
I MUST
HUMBLE THIS
ARROGANT
SAGE.



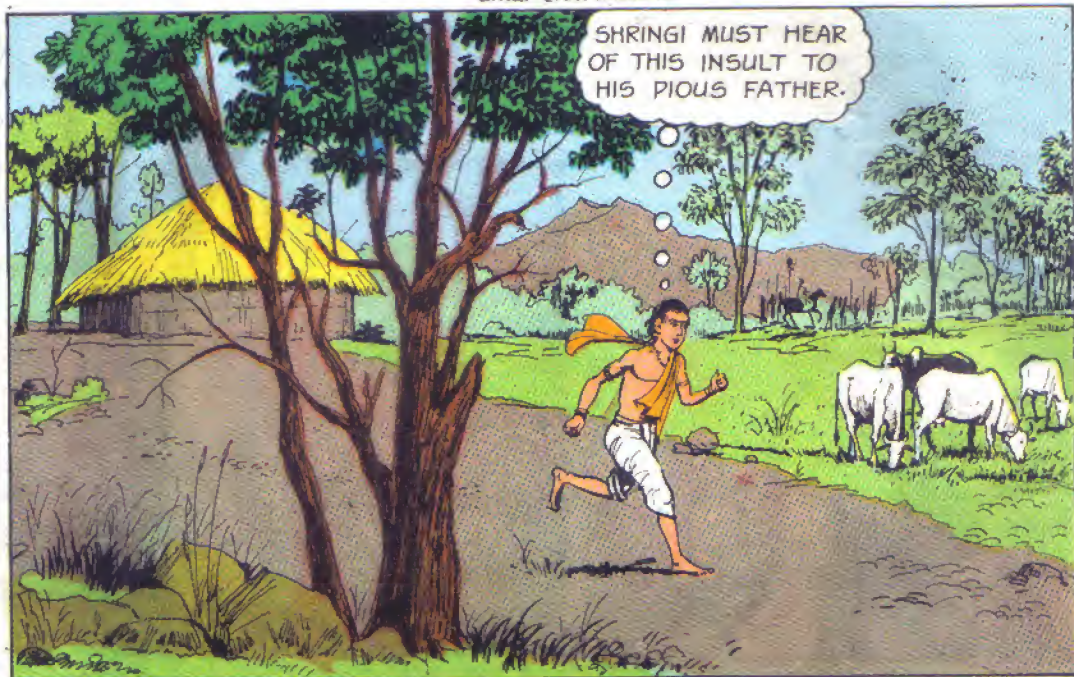
AS HE WALKED OUT OF THE HERMITAGE,
HE SAW A DEAD SERPENT. LIFTING IT
WITH HIS BOW...



... HE WENT BACK AND LAID
IT AROUND THE HOLY MAN'S
SHOULDERS.



A BRAHMAN YOUTH OBSERVED
THIS ACTION OF THE KING.



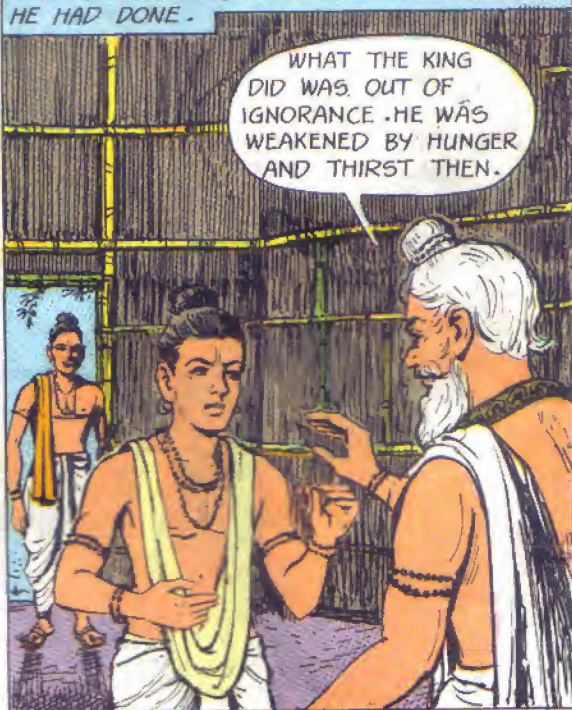
THOUGH A MERE LAD, SHRINGI HAD ACQUIRED GREAT POWER BY HIS PENANCES. BUT HE HAD NOT CONTROLLED HIS GREATEST ENEMY—ANGER. AND IN A RAGE, HE CURSED PAREEKSHIT.

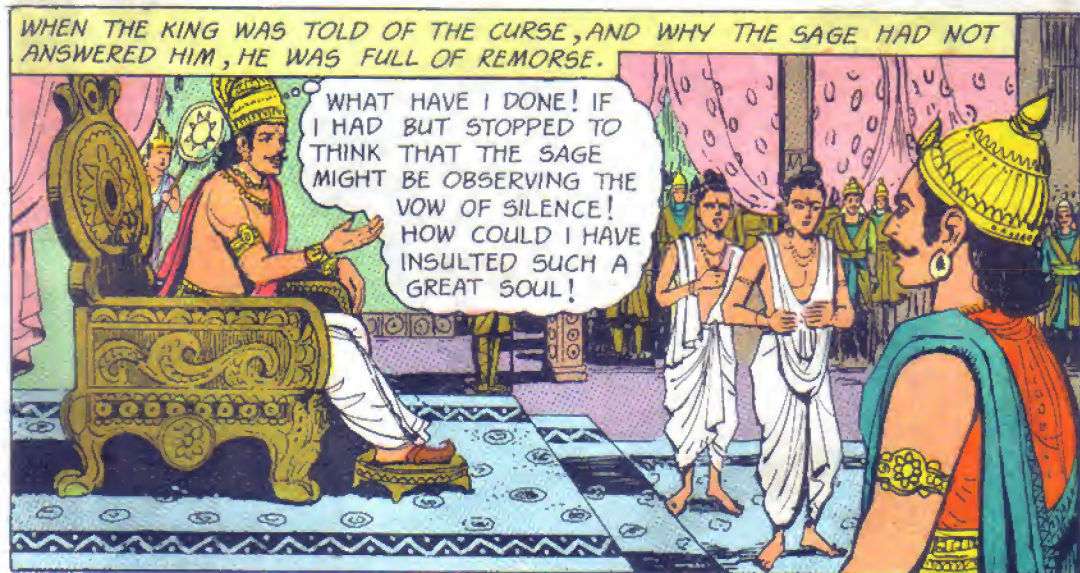
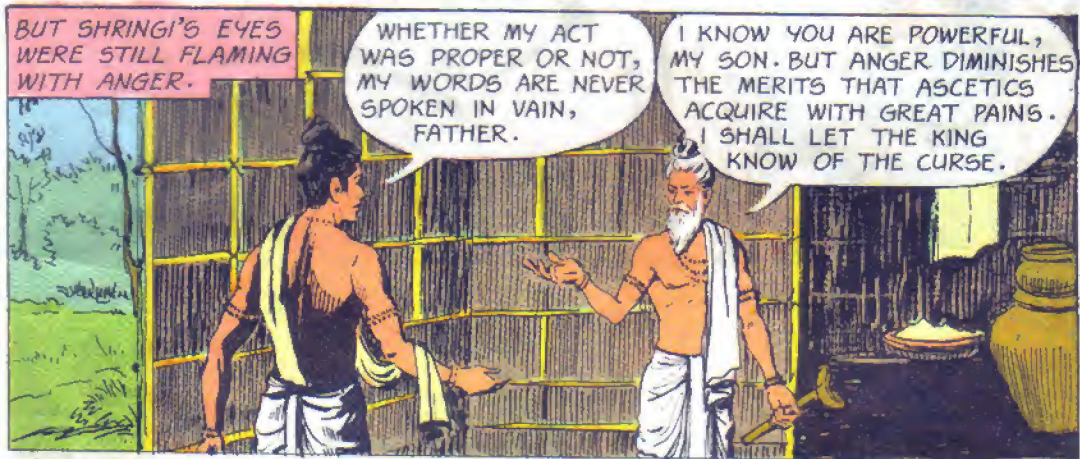
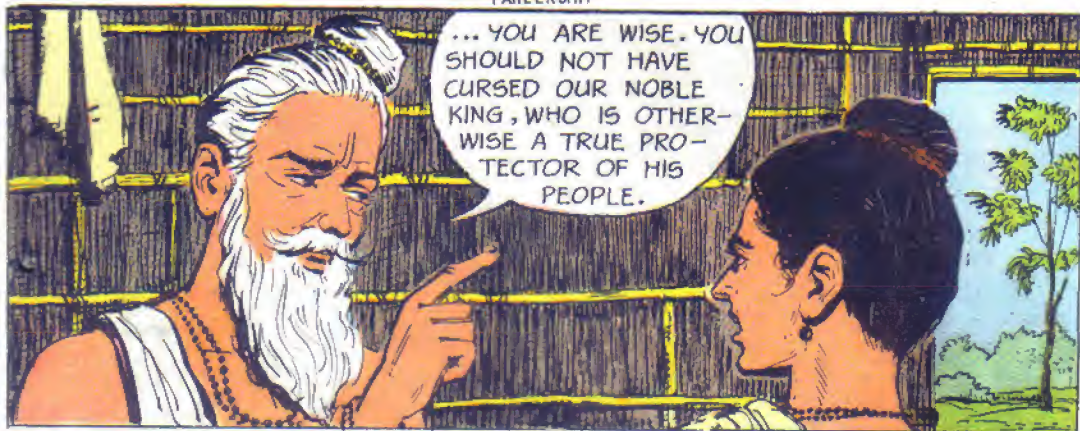
WITHIN SEVEN DAYS, THE MIGHTY SERPENT TAKSHAKA SHALL KILL THE WRETCH WHO DARED PLACE A DEAD SNAKE ON MY PIOUS FATHER'S SHOULDERS.



LATER, WHEN THE SAGE HAD BROKEN HIS VOW OF SILENCE, SHRINGI TOLD HIM WHAT HE HAD DONE.

WHAT THE KING DID WAS OUT OF IGNORANCE. HE WAS WEAKENED BY HUNGER AND THIRST THEN.





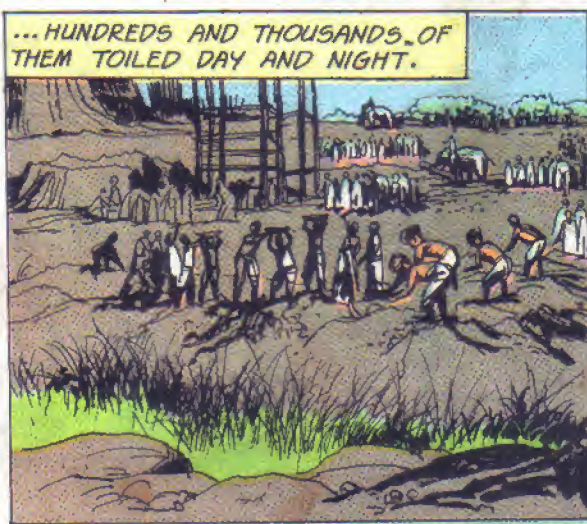
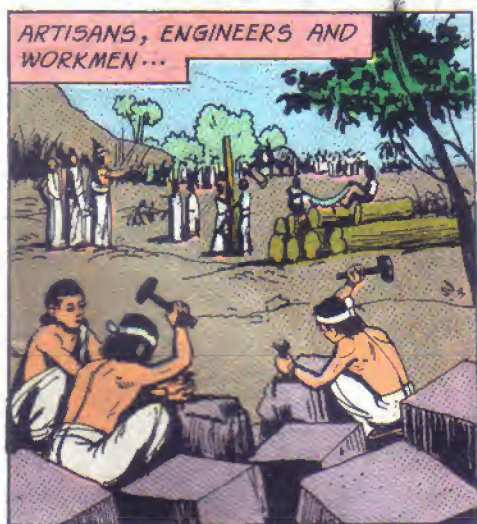
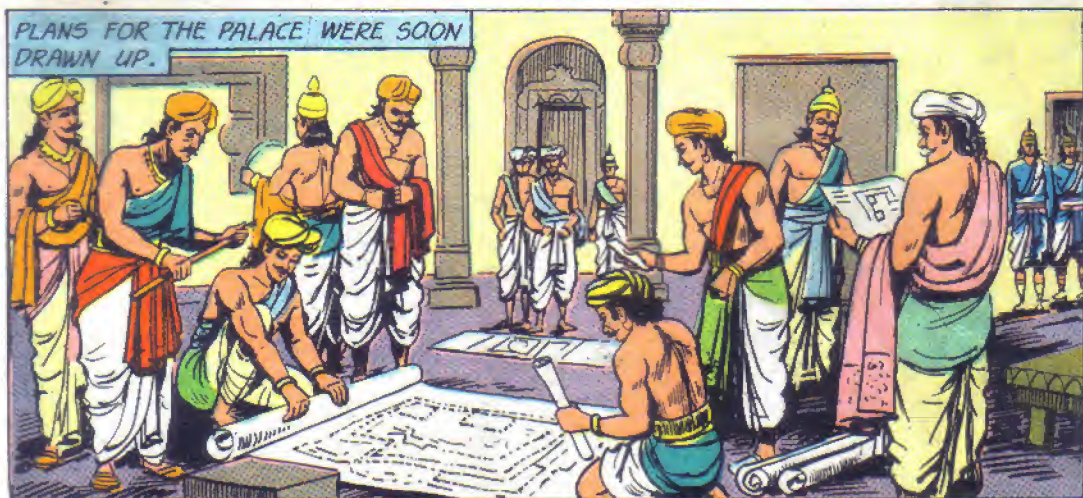
THE KING CALLED A MEETING OF HIS COUNCILLORS AND TOLD THEM THE WHOLE STORY.



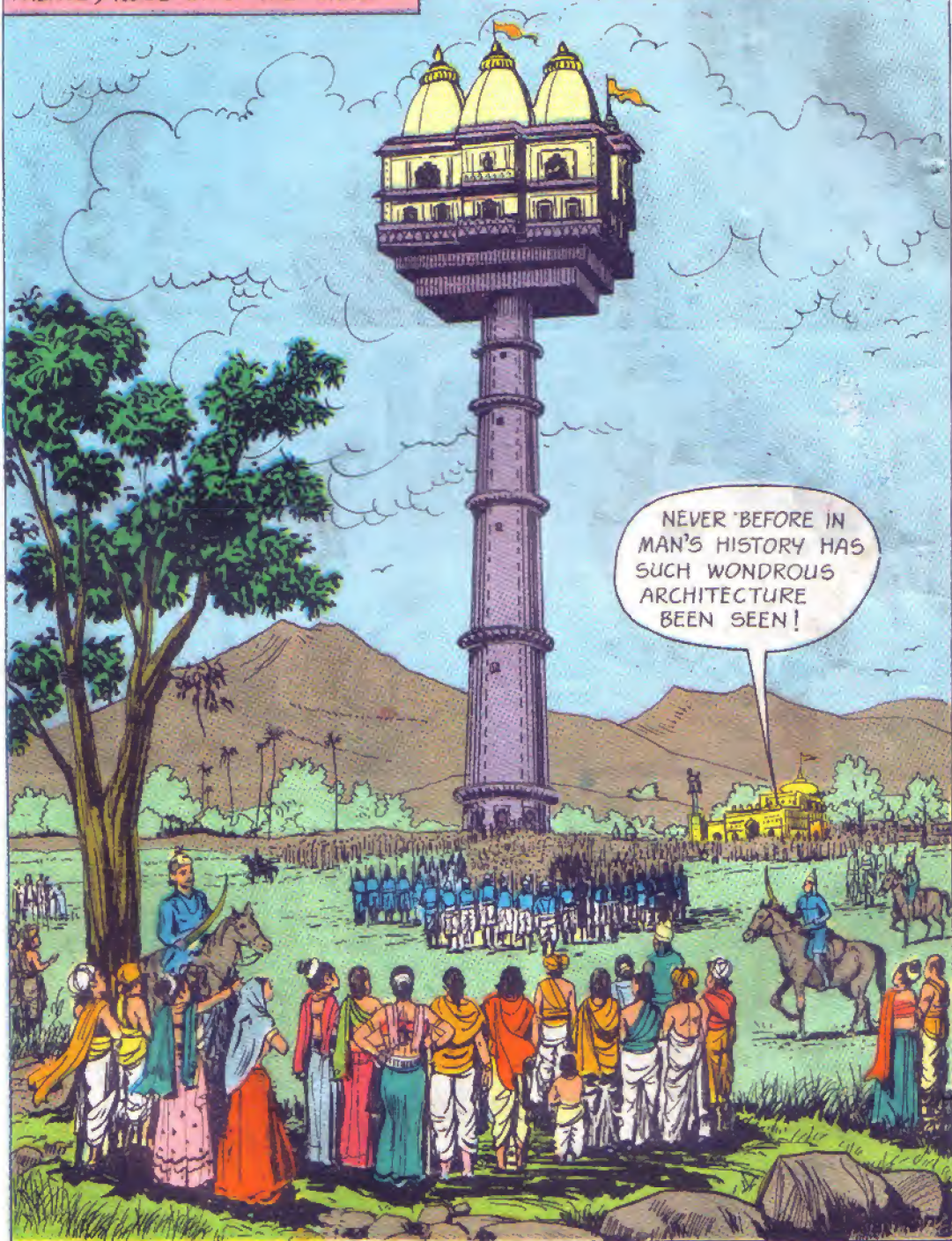
ONE OF THE COUNCILLORS STEPPED FORWARD.



EVERYONE SEEMED IMPRESSED BY HIS PLAN.



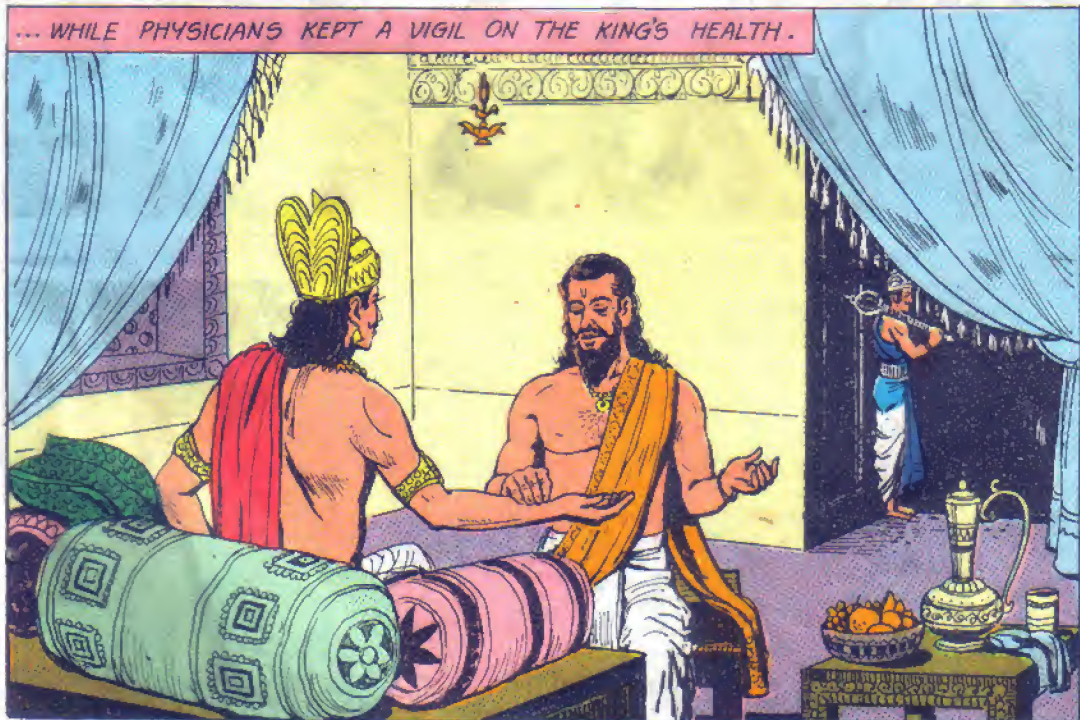
SOON A TALL, IMPOSING PILLAR OF MARBLE, TOPPED BY A MAGNIFICENT PALACE, ROSE INTO THE SKIES.



WITHIN THE PALACE, HUNDREDS OF PRIESTS CHANTED PRAYERS ...



... WHILE PHYSICIANS KEPT A VIGIL ON THE KING'S HEALTH.



EVERY ARTICLE OF FOOD WAS FIRST TASTED BY EXPERTS ...



...BEFORE IT WAS SERVED TO THE KING.



STRICT SECURITY WAS MAINTAINED ROUND THE TOWER.



AS THOUSANDS OF VISITORS WERE TURNED AWAY, KASHYAPA, A POOR BRAHMAN, WAS WENDING HIS WAY TO HASTINAPURA.



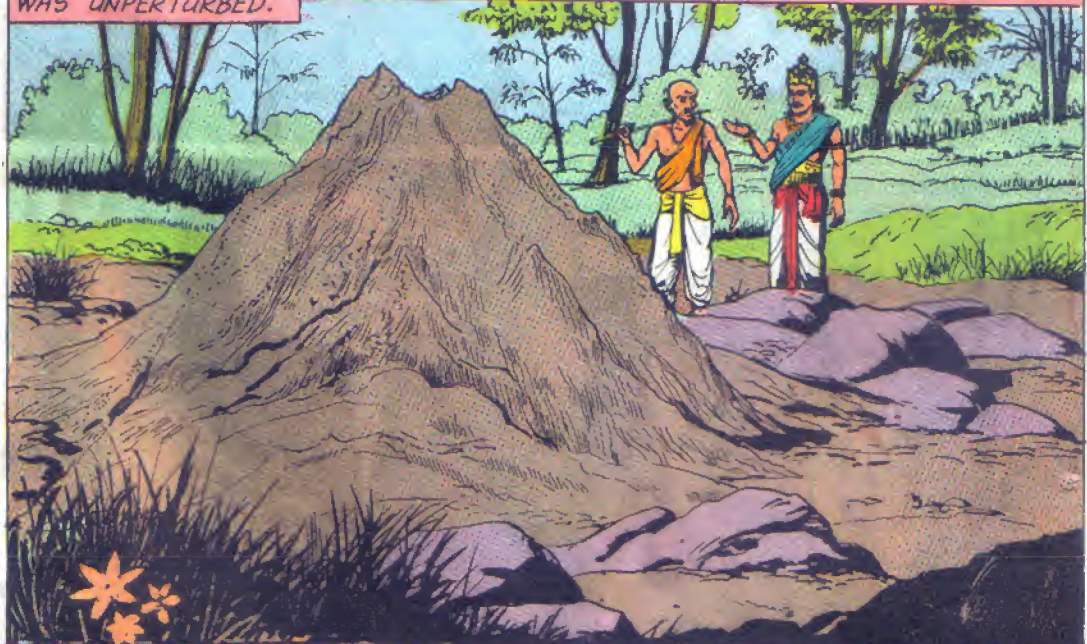




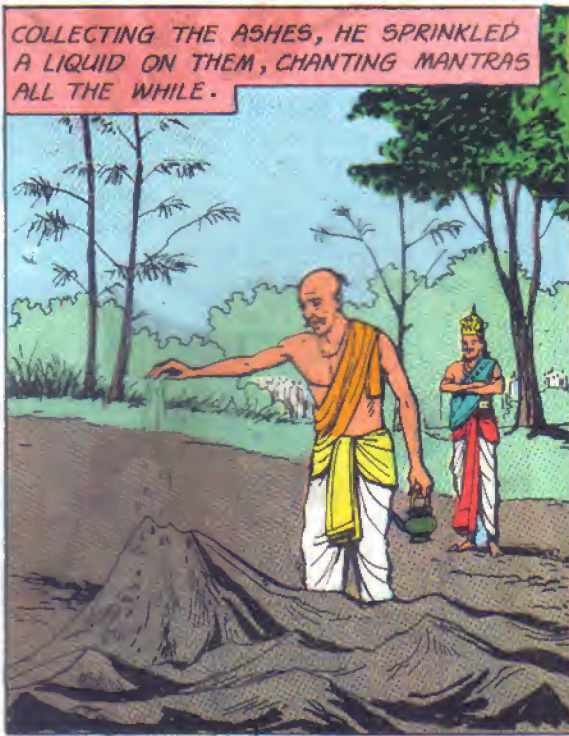
ASSUMING HIS REAL FORM, TAKSHAKA ENTWINED HIMSELF ROUND THE TREE AND BIT INTO ITS BARK.



IN A MATTER OF SECONDS, THE POISONED TREE WAS BURNT TO ASHES. KASHYAPA WAS UNPERTURBED.



COLLECTING THE ASHES, HE SPRINKLED A LIQUID ON THEM, CHANTING MANTRAS ALL THE WHILE.



THE ASHES HAVE TURNED INTO CHARCOAL!

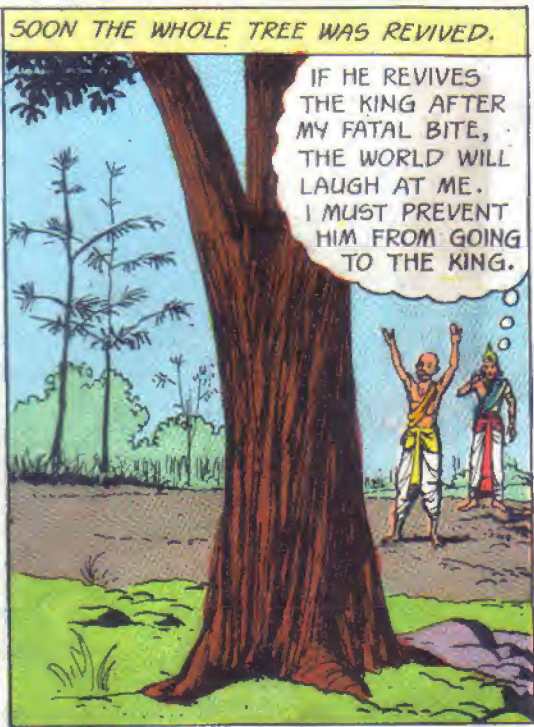


THE CHARCOAL IS BECOMING WOOD... BRANCHES HAVE FORMED!



SOON THE WHOLE TREE WAS REVIVED.

IF HE REVIVES THE KING AFTER MY FATAL BITE, THE WORLD WILL LAUGH AT ME. I MUST PREVENT HIM FROM GOING TO THE KING.



TAKSHAKA WAS WORRIED. BUT ONLY FOR A MOMENT.

THIS BRAHMAN IS IN NEED OF WEALTH. I CAN YET MAKE HIM TURN BACK.



O PIOUS BRAHMAN, IF IT IS YOUR NEED FOR WEALTH THAT TAKES YOU TO THE KING, I CAN GIVE YOU MORE WEALTH THAN YOU COULD EVER HAVE HOPED TO GET FROM HIM. ACCEPT IT AND GO IN PEACE.

SO BE IT.



THE BARGAIN WAS MADE. AS SOON AS THE POOR BRAHMAN HAD LEFT —

O LOYAL SUBJECTS AND BRETHREN, I COMMAND YOU TO APPEAR BEFORE ME!

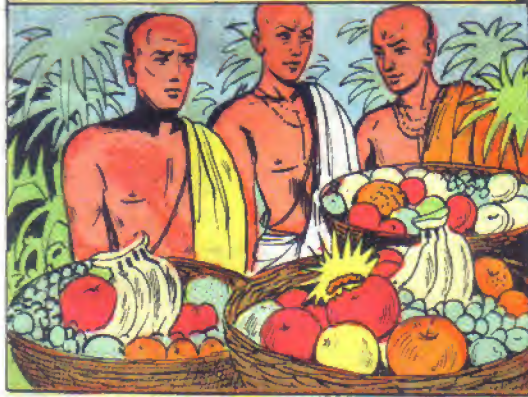


AS THE SNAKES IN THE VICINITY BEGAN TO MAKE THEIR APPEARANCE —

YOU SHALL BECOME BRAHMANNS AND CARRY BASKETS OF FRUITS FOR THE KING !.



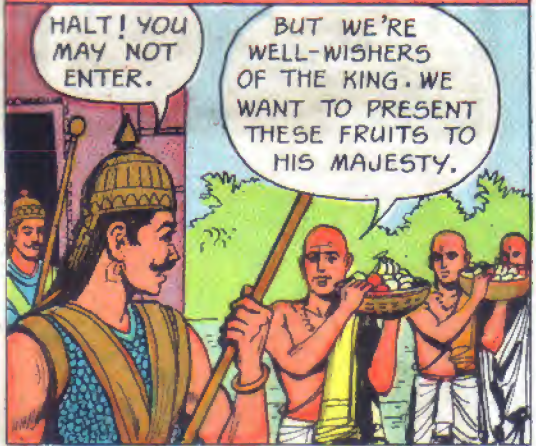
TAKSHAKA THEN REDUCED HIMSELF TO THE SIZE OF A WORM AND BORED HIS WAY INTO ONE OF THE FRUITS.



LATER, AT THE BASE OF THE PILLAR —

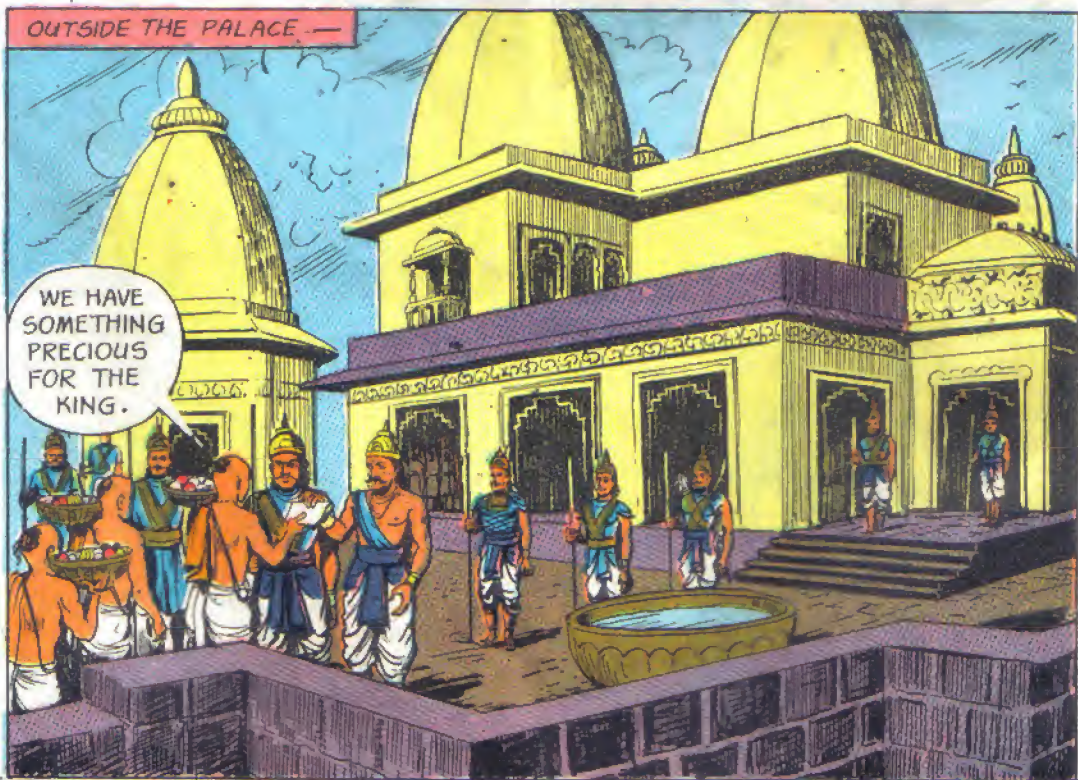
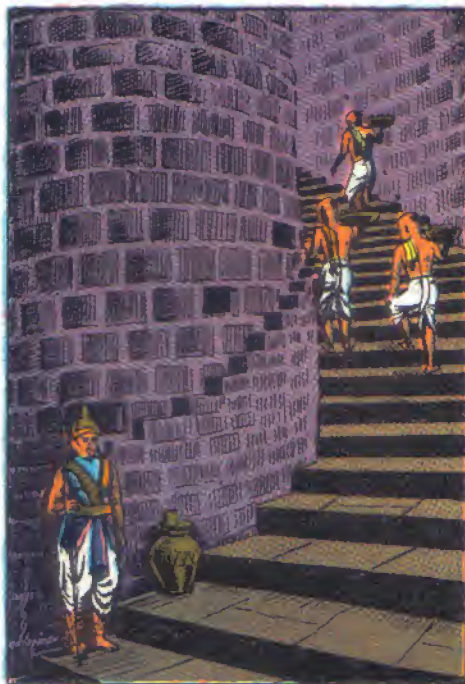
HALT ! YOU MAY NOT ENTER.

BUT WE'RE WELL-WISHERS OF THE KING. WE WANT TO PRESENT THESE FRUITS TO HIS MAJESTY.



THEY'RE HARMLESS BRAHMANNS, LET THEM ENTER.



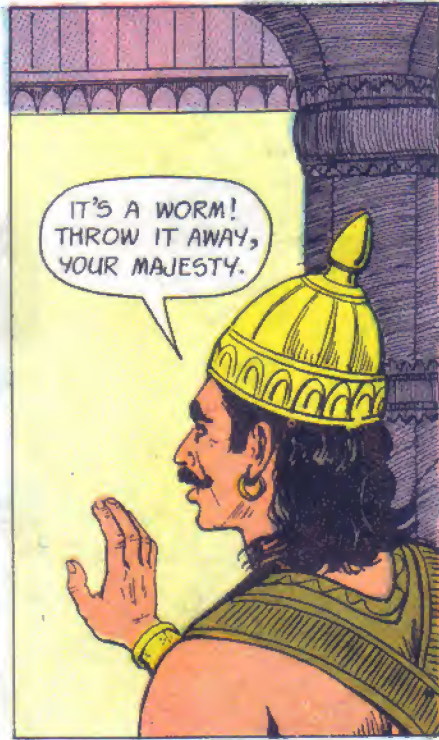


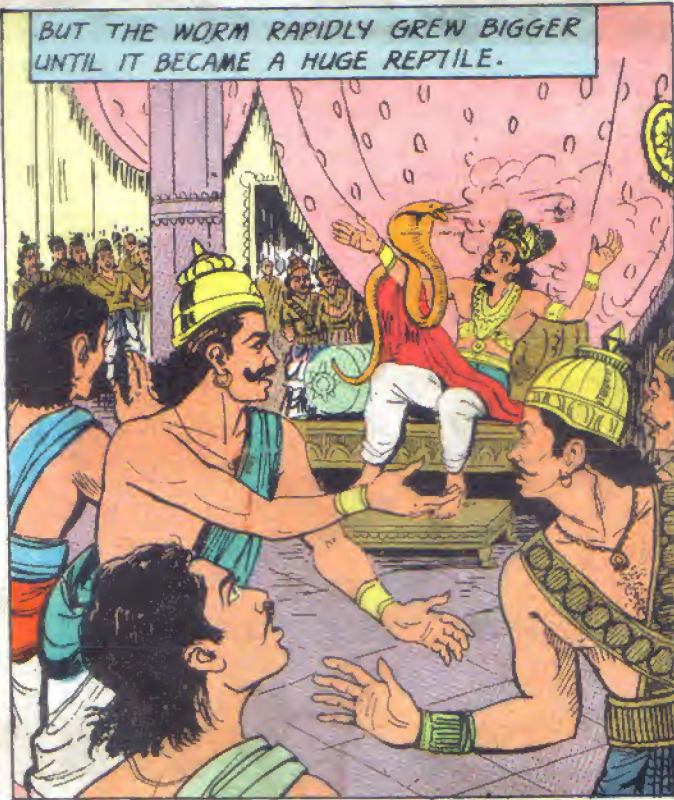
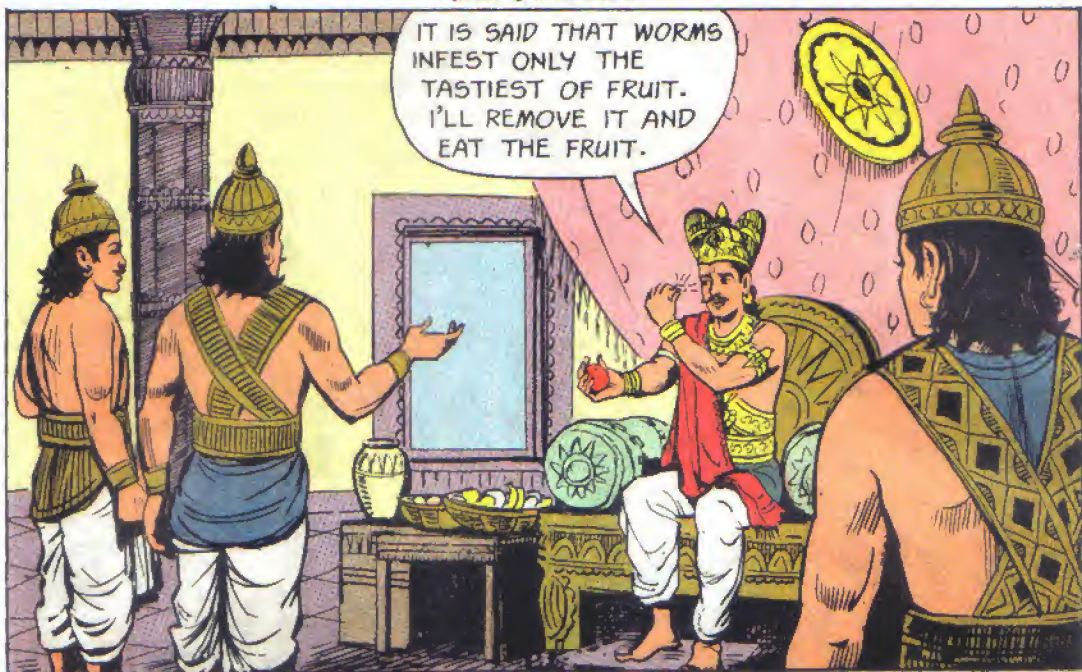


THE KING PICKED UP ONE OF THE FRUITS AND TOOK A BITE.



IT'S A WORM!
THROW IT AWAY,
YOUR MAJESTY.

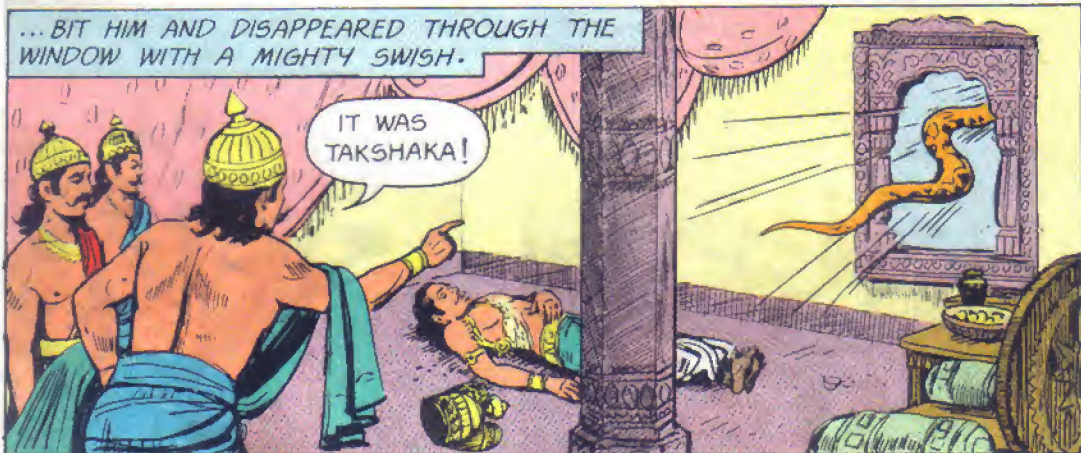




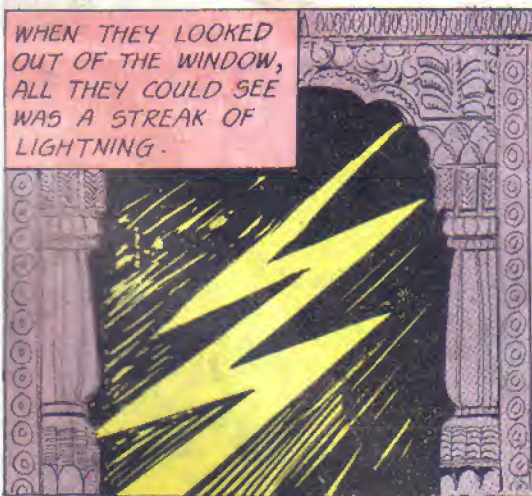
IT STRANGLLED-THE KING...



...BIT HIM AND DISAPPEARED THROUGH THE WINDOW WITH A MIGHTY SWISH.



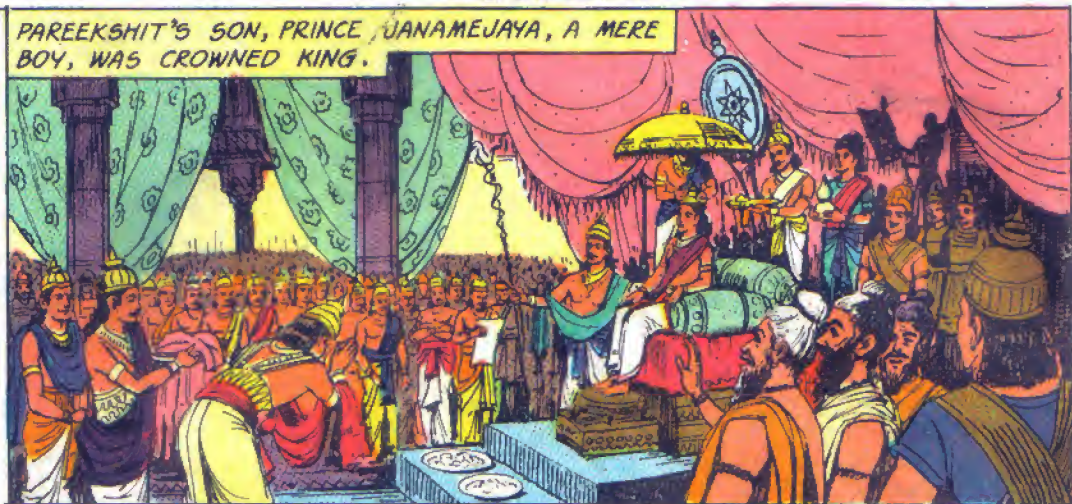
WHEN THEY LOOKED OUT OF THE WINDOW, ALL THEY COULD SEE WAS A STREAK OF LIGHTNING.



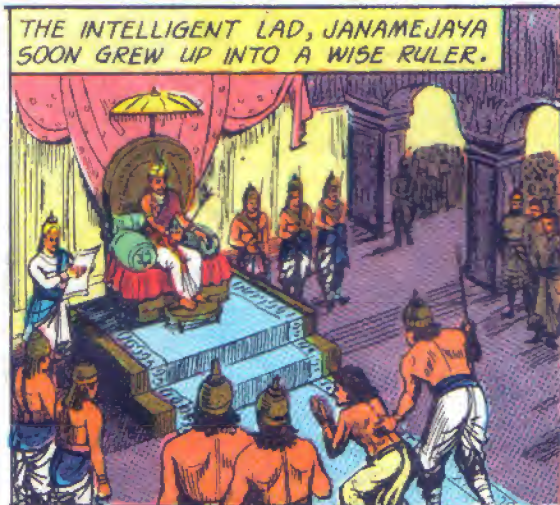
OH, LORD!
THE KING
IS DEAD!



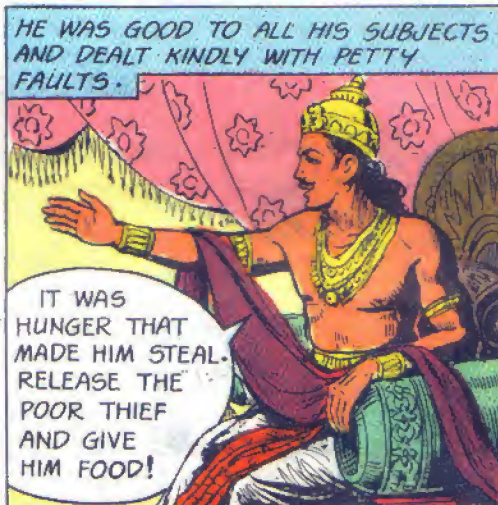
PAREEKSHIT'S SON, PRINCE JANAMEJAYA, A MERE BOY, WAS CROWNED KING.



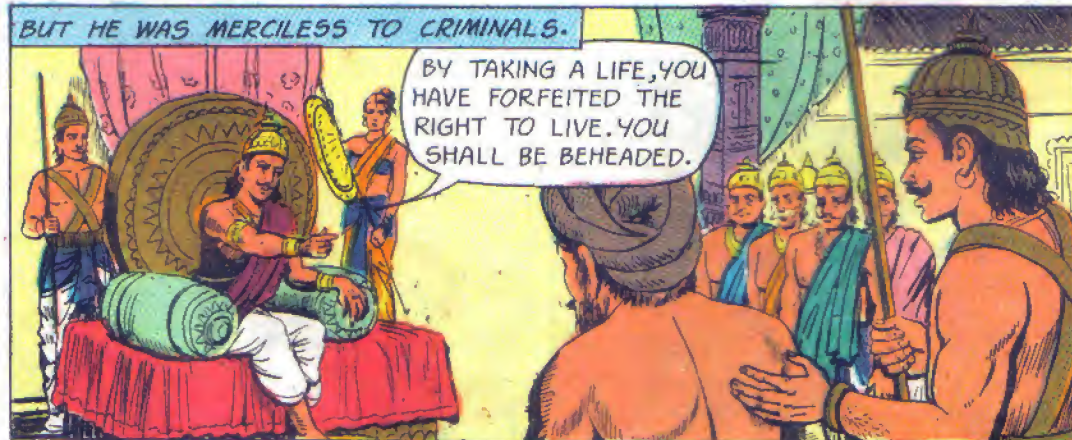
THE INTELLIGENT LAD, JANAMEJAYA
SOON GREW UP INTO A WISE RULER.



HE WAS GOOD TO ALL HIS SUBJECTS
AND DEALT KINDLY WITH PETTY
FAULTS. [REDACTED] 1112



BUT HE WAS MERCILESS TO CRIMINALS.



ONE DAY, HE HEARD FROM HIS MINISTERS THE WHOLE STORY OF HIS FATHER'S SUDDEN DEATH. HE WAS SHOCKED.



THE KING SPOKE WITH MOUNTING WRATH.

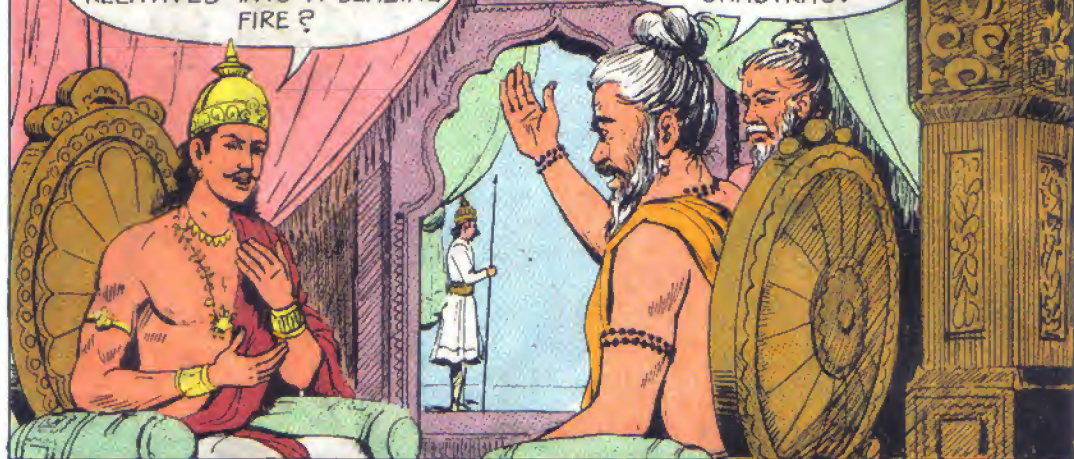


* SERPENT.

WHEN HIS ANGER HAD SUBSIDED, THE KING CONSULTED HIS PRIESTS.

IS THERE ANY WAY BY WHICH I CAN SEND TAKSHAKA WITH ALL HIS FRIENDS AND RELATIVES INTO A BLAZING FIRE?

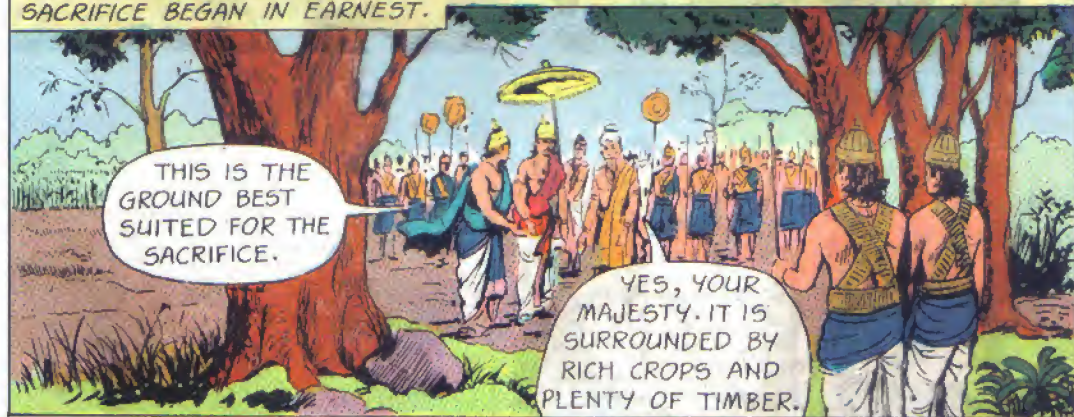
THERE IS, O KING. PERFORM THE SARPASATRA AS ORDAINED IN THE SHASTRAS.



THE KING APPROVED OF THE IDEA, AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE GREAT SNAKE SACRIFICE BEGAN IN EARNEST.

THIS IS THE GROUND BEST SUITED FOR THE SACRIFICE.

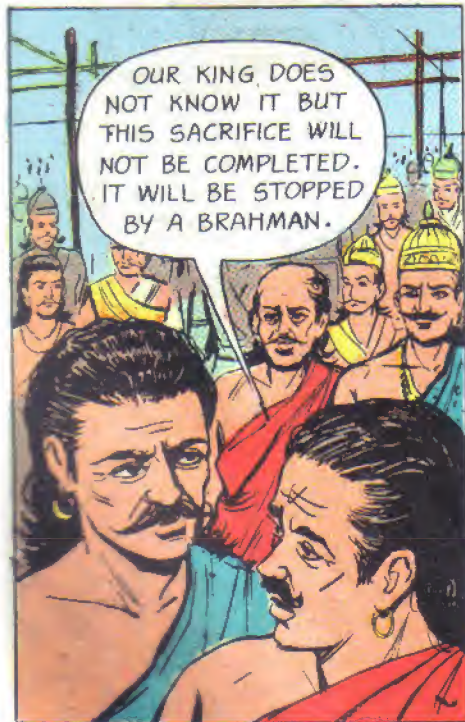
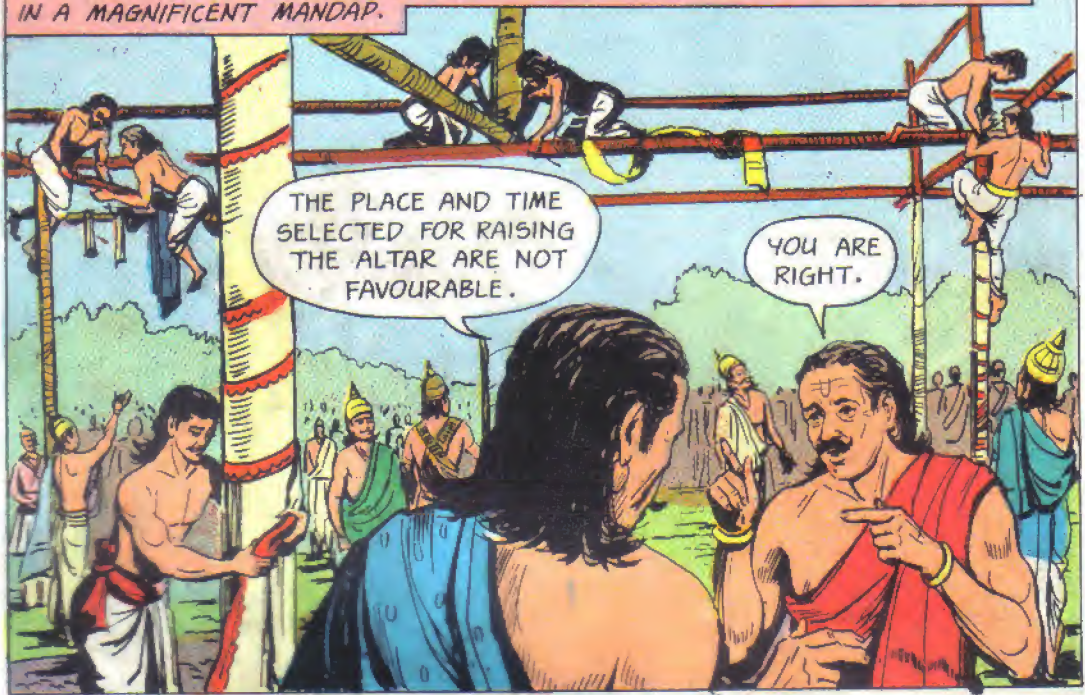
YES, YOUR MAJESTY. IT IS SURROUNDED BY RICH CROPS AND PLENTY OF TIMBER.



THE GROUND WAS CLEARED WITH ALL POSSIBLE SPEED AND THEN CONSECRATED.



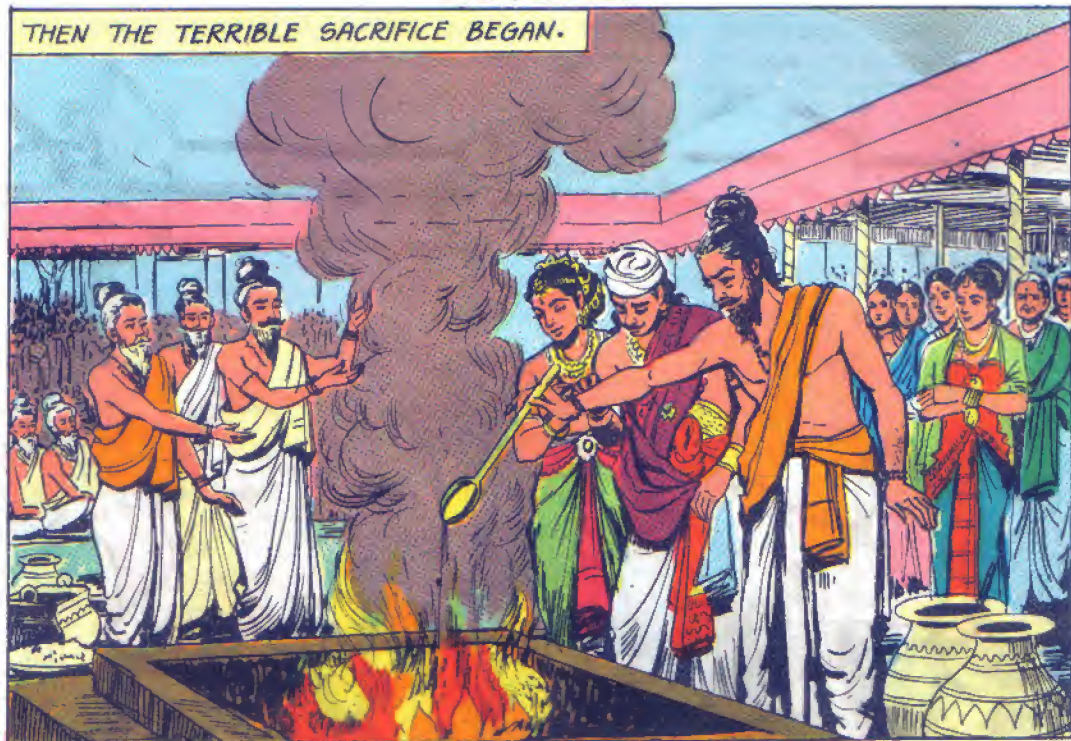
MASONS AND CARPENTERS STARTED BUILDING THE HOLY ALTAR, HOUSED IN A MAGNIFICENT MANDAP.



THE PRIME MINISTER WHO OVERHEARD THESE REMARKS SPOKE TO THE KING. DETERMINED TO SUCCEED IN HIS VENTURE, JANAMEJAYA GAVE ORDERS.



THEN THE TERRIBLE SACRIFICE BEGAN.



REPEAT WITH ME, O NAGAS,
I CHARGE YOU TO COME
AS OFFERINGS TO THE
ALL-POWERFUL AGNI.



O NAGAS,
I CHARGE
YOU ...



AS THE NAME OF EACH NAGA WAS UTTERED, HE WAS DRAGGED BY THE POWER OF THE MANTRAS INTO THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.

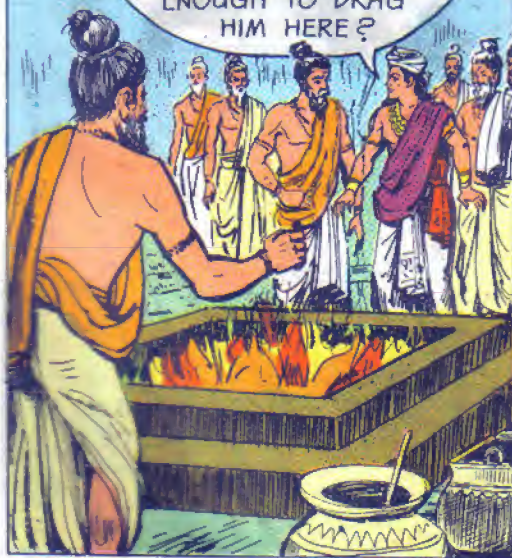
COME, O KALADANTAKA!
COME HITHER, MANDALAKA,
BILWATEJAS, SHARABHA,
KUNDALA, SUSHENA...

KUNDALA,
SUSHENA...



THOUSANDS OF SNAKES WERE
CONSUMED BY AGNI. BUT THERE
WAS NO SIGN OF TAKSHAKA.

WHY DOESN'T TAKSHAKA
COME? AREN'T YOUR
MANTRAS POWERFUL
ENOUGH TO DRAG
HIM HERE?



WE ARE
DOING OUR
BEST, NOBLE
KING.

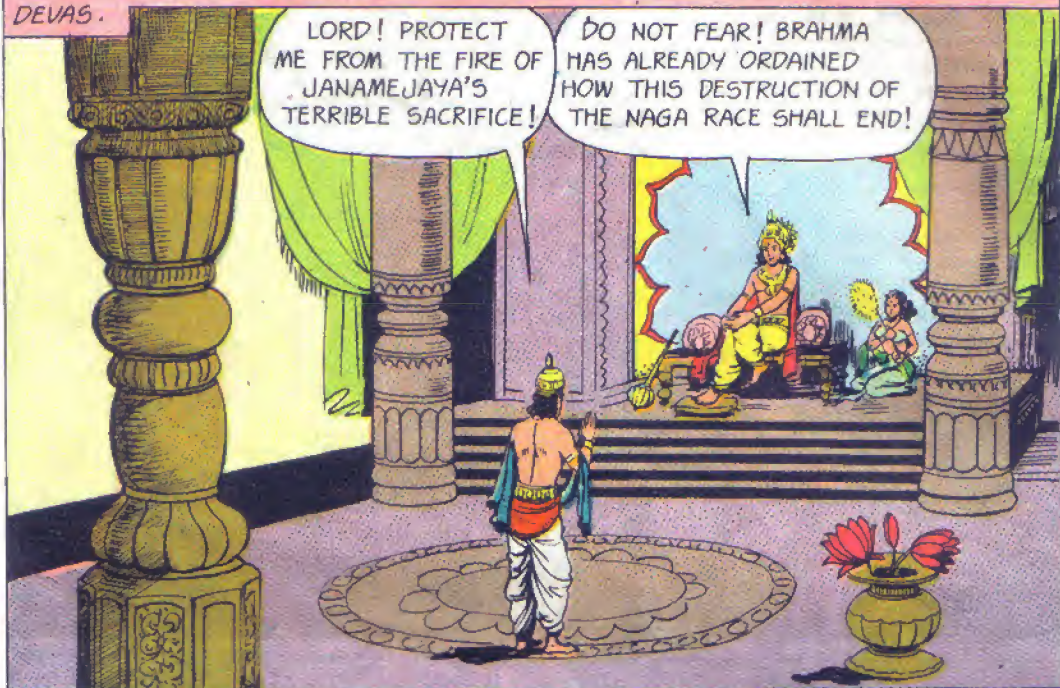
TAKSHAKA HAS NOT
COME BECAUSE HE IS
PROTECTED BY
INDRA, THE LORD OF
ALL SACRIFICES.



SHAKING WITH FEAR, TAKSHAKA HAD INDEED FLED TO INDRA, KING OF THE DEVAS.

LORD! PROTECT ME FROM THE FIRE OF JANAMEJAYA'S TERRIBLE SACRIFICE!

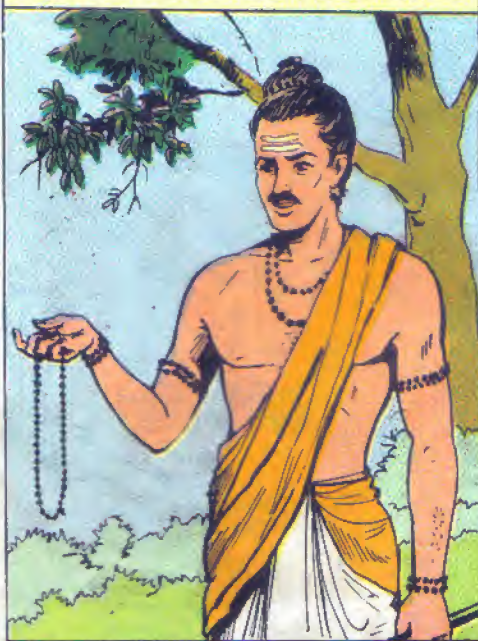
DO NOT FEAR! BRAHMA HAS ALREADY ORDAINED HOW THIS DESTRUCTION OF THE NAGA RACE SHALL END!



THE YOUNG SAGE ASTIKA SHALL BE YOUR SAVIOUR.



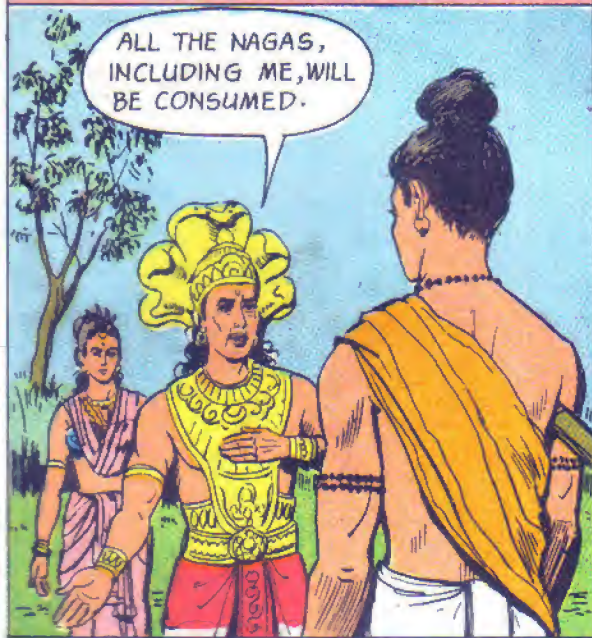
ASTIKA WAS THE SON OF JARATKARU, A BRAHMAN, AND HIS NAGA WIFE.*



* VASUKI'S SISTER.

VASUKI WAS THE KING OF THE NAGAS. HE RAN TO ASTIKA WITH HIS TALE OF WOE.

ALL THE NAGAS,
INCLUDING ME, WILL
BE CONSUMED.

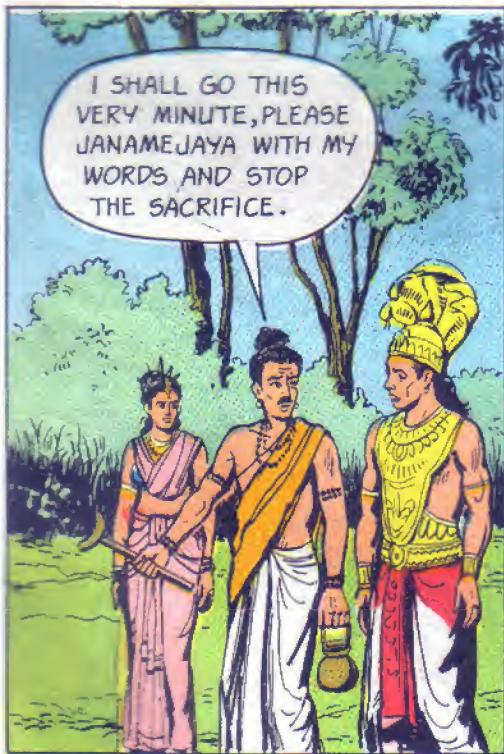


YOU ALONE
CAN STOP THIS
DISASTER!

I SHALL TRY
MY BEST TO
SAVE THE
SNAKES.



I SHALL GO THIS
VERY MINUTE, PLEASE
JANAMEJAYA WITH MY
WORDS AND STOP
THE SACRIFICE.



BUT WHEN ASTIKA REACHED THE VENUE
OF THE YAGNA —

NO ONE MAY ENTER
THE SACRIFICIAL EN-
CLOSURE WITHOUT
THE KING'S
PERMISSION.



INSIDE, THE PRIESTS WERE CHANTING THEIR MANTRAS WITH MOUNTING VEHEMENCE.



TAKSHAKA,
I COMMAND
THEE TO
COME.

LET II.DRA
COME WITH
TAKSHAKA.

SWAHA!
SWAHA!
SWAHA!

TAKSHAKA AND HIS MIGHTY PRO-
TECTOR WERE DRAGGED TOWARDS
THE SACRIFICIAL FIRE.



INDRA LOOKED DOWN ANXIOUSLY
WHILE TAKSHAKA CLUNG DESPERATELY
TO HIS SHAWL.



I AM POWERLESS TO
HELP TAKSHAKA. I HAD
BETTER FLEE.

AND INDRA FLED.

TAKSHAKA BEGAN FALLING.

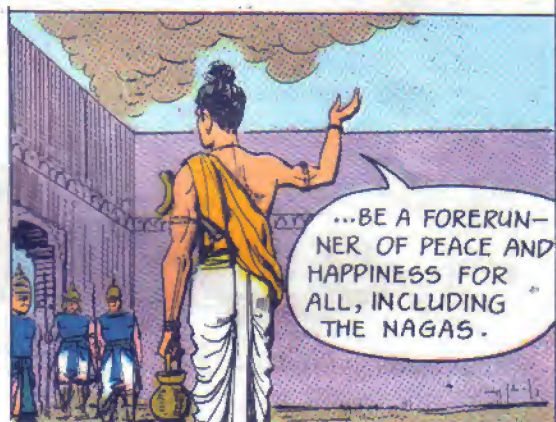
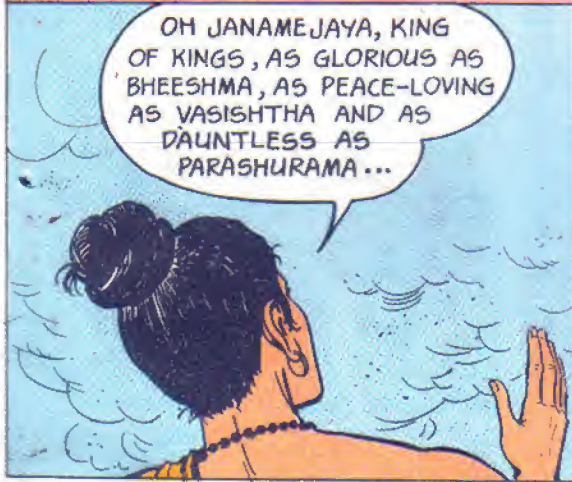


TISHTHA! *
TISHTHA!

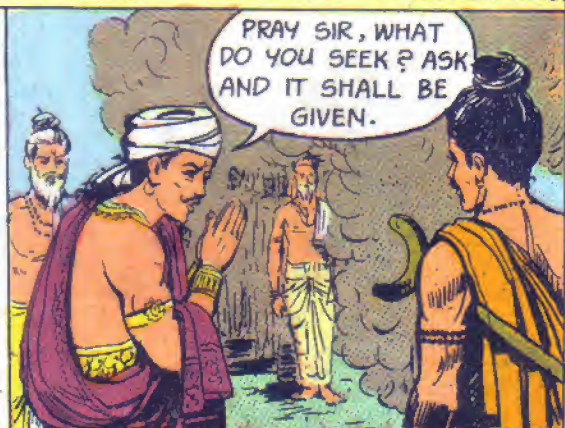
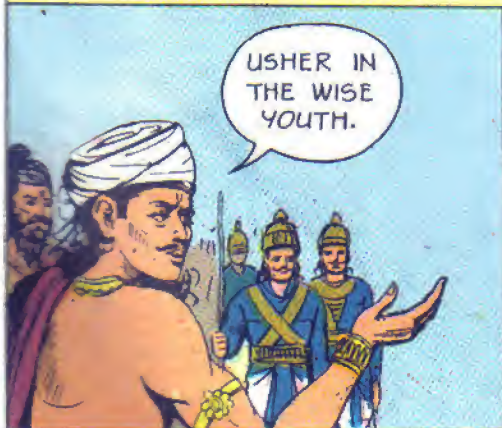
IT WAS ASTIKA.

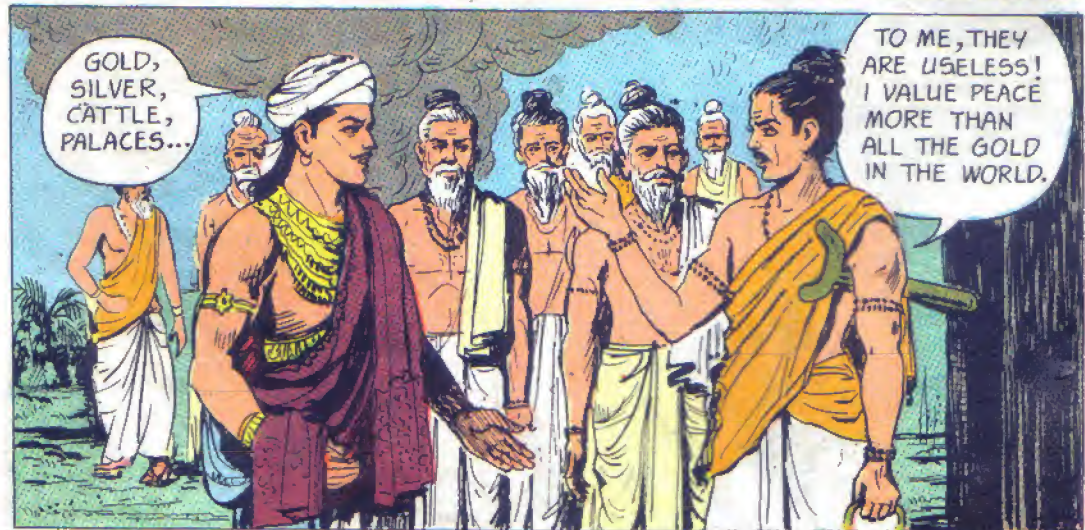
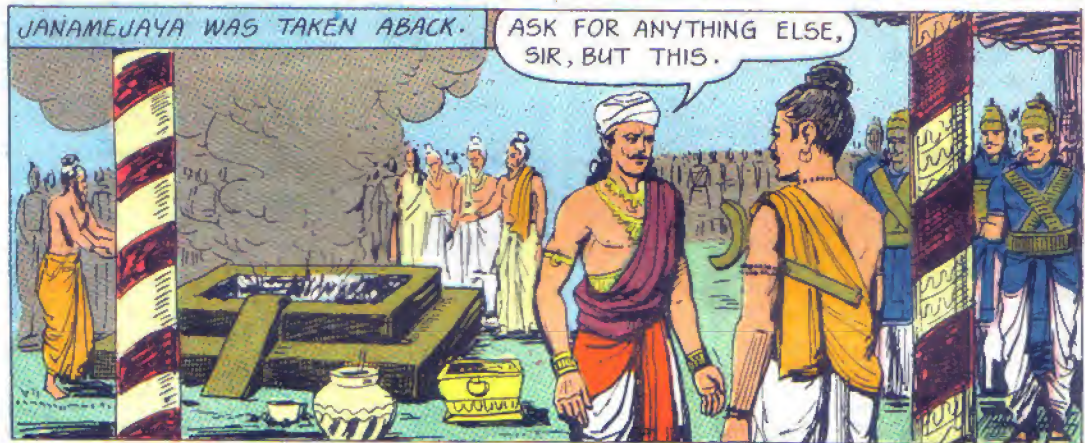
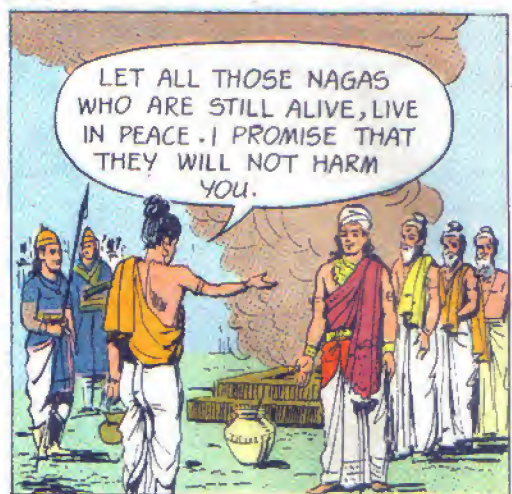
* STAY! STAY!

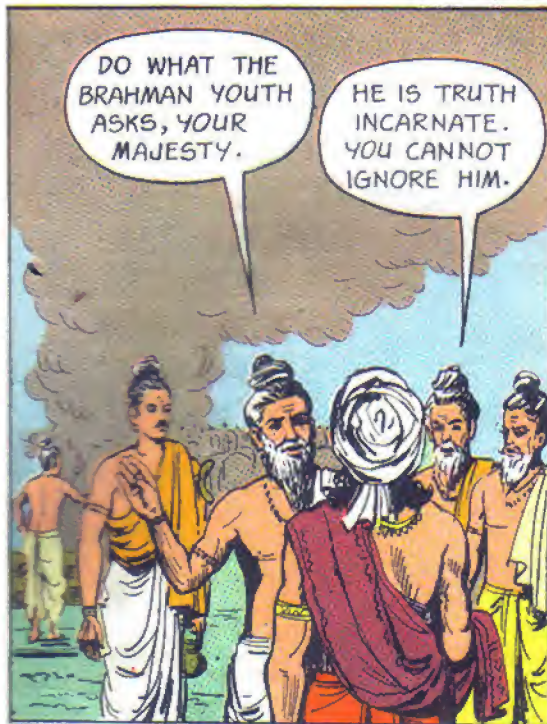
THEN ASTIKA STOOD ON THE SPOT AND BLESSED THE KING. HIS WORDS WERE SWEET MUSIC TO ALL WHO LISTENED.



THESE WORDS REACHED THE EARS OF JANAMEJAYA. HE TURNED TO HIS GUARDS.







HEEDING THE WORDS OF HIS
SPIRITUAL ADVISERS, JANAMEJAYA
GAVE ORDERS.



EVERYONE PRESENT REJOICED, AND
JANAMEJAYA KNEW A HAPPINESS
HE HAD NEVER KNOWN BEFORE.

WHEN ASTIKA RETURNED HOME, HE WAS HAILED LOVINGLY BY THE NAGAS
WHOSE LIVES HE HAD SAVED.





AMAR CHITRA KATHA

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